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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was administered to 94 first- and middle-level managers from 19 different state agencies in Texas in an effort to analyze conditions under which managers were most likely to disclose task-relevant confidential information to their subordinates. The open-ended items on the questionnaire investigated the types of confidential job-related information, target persons for confidential information disclosures, reasons for providing such information, settings for such information sharing, and the number of participants in these encounters. The rank order items involved the ordering of confidential information according to which types of information the managers were most and least likely to share with subordinates, and the ordering of reasons according to which the managers perceived were most and least common reasons for giving such information. Among the eight findings are the following: (1) managers were most likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information concerning structural changes within the organization, and in order to motivate, increase team spirit, and increase awareness; (2) managers were least likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information concerning the subordinate's peers; and (3) managers were least likely to disclose information in order to develop trust and to prepare workers for anticipated changes. (HOD)

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The Superior-Subordinate Relationship: A Preliminary Study of Downward Task-Relevant Confidential Information Disclosure in the Public Sector

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Paper presented to the Southern Speech Communication Association Annual Convention, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 1985

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The Superior-Subordinate Relationship: A Preliminary Study of Downward Task-Relevant Confidential Information Disclosure in the Public Sector

Abstract

This investigation was a field study analyzing conditions under which managers are most likely to disclose task-relevant confidential information to their subordinates. Ninety-four first and middle level managers from 19 different state agencies in Texas were administered a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Analysis of the data revealed definite trends regarding the types of information which managers are most and least likely to discuss with their subordinates, reasons for disclosures, settings for such interactions, and the number of participants involved in such information exchanges. Responses regarding the extent to which such disclosures were planned and the extent to which they were regretted were dichotomous.

The Superior-Subordinate Relationship: A Preliminary Study of Downward Task-Relevant Confidential Information Disclosure in the Public Sector

In recent years, information disclosure in superior-subordinate communication in the organizational setting has been the focus of varied research efforts. To date, communication openness has been examined, using a variety of approaches. For example, openness can occur within the processes of message-sending or message-receiving (Redding, 1972); it may be task-relevant or non-task relevant in nature (Baird, 1974; Stull, 1975); or it may be upward or downward in its flow.

Equivocal as well as positive results from research in the area of communicative openness exist. For example, research does exist which questions the relationship between managerial effectiveness and communication openness between superiors and subordinates (Rubin & Goldman, 1968). On the other hand, openness in communication has been found by other researchers to lead to an effective organizational climate (Haney, 1967; Likert, 1967), higher job satisfaction (Jablin, 1978a), and enhanced organizational performance (Willits, 1967). In spite of this equivocal and positive support, most practitioners continue to stress the importance of openness in communication between managers and their workers. This priority is evidenced by statements such as the following expressed in the General Motors Corporation guidelines for manager/employee communication: "Managers and supervisors

should be encouraged to share with employes all information that is useful for increasing employe understanding of, and contributions to, the operation of the business" (1983:2).

Given the general consensus that communication openness is a desirable goal, what factors determine "appropriate" levels of disclosure in the organizational setting? The perception of openness as a panacea is aptly described by Katz and Kahn, who believe that:

> The discovery of the crucial role of communication led to an enthusiastic advocacy of increased information as the solution to many organizational problems. More and better communication (especially more) was the slogan. Information to rank-and-file employees about company goals and policies was the doctrine; the means too often were stylized programs and house organs homogenized by the Flesch formula for basic English. (1978:429-430)

One indicator of the appropriateness of communication openness is the extent to which the information is viewed by the organization as confidential, and organizations are quick to admit that:

> While an open climate of information-sharing is desirable to satisfy both the needs of the business and of our employ(e)s, it is important to safeguard the security of certain types of confidential information. This would include information which , if available to competitors or to the general public, would be advantageous to competitors or detrimential to GM, its shareholders, or its employ(e)s. (General Motors, 1983:4)

Areas which are traditionally perceived as sensitive or confidential include salaries, budgets, and market plans for organizations (Miner, 1974; Zaffarano, 1974). Thus, confidential information, in the context of the present study, refers to any information which is private, prejudicial, or potentially harmful to an organization and/or its employees, and may therefore be macrocosmic or microcosmic in nature. This type of communication should be distinguished

from privileged information which has traditionally referred to to that information which is shared in dyadic interactions between a professional and client. Privileged may therefore be confidential, but confidentialinformation may not necessarily be privileged in nature.

Although the importance of communication openness has been thoroughly investigated and acknowledged, minimal attention has been given to assessing conditions under which supervisory disclosure of confidential information might be perceived as acceptable. Thus, the present research builds on past research on communication openness and extends these analyses to the disclosure of confidential communication within the organizational setting, seeking to locate which types of disclosures first-level managers (i.e.supervisors who direct individuals who actually do the work or provide a given service) and middle-level managers (i.e. supervisors who direct first-level managers) perceive as acceptable.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Superior-Subordinate Communication

In examining the disclosure of job-related information in organizational communication, one must recognize that the area of superior-subordinate communication has been the focus of considerable research. In fact, "How superiors and subordinates interact and communicate to achieve both personal and organizational goals has been an object of investigation by social scientists for most of the 20th century" (Jablin, 1979:1201).

During the course of superior-subordinate communication, information may be exchanged in the dyadic interaction on a number of levels. Of special interest in the present study is downward

communication of which there are five types: (1)specific task directives: job instructions; (2)information designed to produce understanding of the task and its relation to other organizational tasks: job rationale; (3)information about organizational procedures and practices; (4)feedback to the subordinate about his/her performance; and (5)information of an idealogical character to inculcate a sense of mission: indoctrination of goals (Katz & Kahn, 1978:440). However, upward communication is equally important, and it includes four types: (1)information about the subordinate himself/herself; (2)information about co-workers and their problems; (3)information about organizational practices and policies; and (4)information about what needs to be done and how it can be done (Katz & Kahn, 1978:446).

In considering the downward flow of communication in the organizational setting, one can actually examine two areas: emergent patterns of interaction between superiors and subordinates, and emergent patterns of behavior for supervisors who are successful at achieving organizational goals.

Not only is between one third and two thirds of a superior's time spent communicating with subordinates, but face-to-face discussion is the dominant form of interaction between the two parties (Jablin, 1979; Berkowitz & Bennis, 1961; Brenner & Sigband, 1973; Dubin & Spray, 1964; Hinrichs, 1964; Kelly, 1964; Lawler, Porter, & Tenenbaum, 1968; Penfield, 1974). Since the majority of the interactions between superiors and subordinates concerns task issues as opposed to personal topics (Jablin, 1979; Baird, 1974; Richetto, 1969; Zima, 1969) and since subordinates who need informal help in the work setting are more likely to seek assistance

from their superiors than their peers or subordinates (Burke, Weir, & Duncan, 1976), the superior-subordinate interaction must be recognized as a significant means to achieving organizational goals.

Although research has really not delineated a definite set of effective supervisory communicative behaviors, research does exist which suggests certain patterns of behavior. The identification of these communication behaviors, which according to Jablin, "...has received more investigation than any other area of organizational communication" (1979:1208), has resulted in a number of conclusions:

(1) The better supervisors tend to be more "communication-minded"; e.g., they enjoy talking and speaking up in meetings; they are able to explain instructions and policies; they enjoy conversing with subordinates.

(2) The better supervisors tend to be willing, empathic listeners; they respond understandingly to so-called "silly" questions from employees; they are approachable; they will listen to suggestions and complaints, with an attitude of fair consideration and willingness to take appropriate action.

(3) The better supervisors tend to "ask" or "persuade", in preference to "telling" or "demanding."

(4) The better supervisors tend to be sensitive to the feelings and ego-defense needs of their subordinates; e.g., they are careful to reprimand in private rather than in public.

(5) The better supervisors tend to be more open in their passing along of information; they are in favor of giving advance notice of impendingchanges, and of explaining the "reasons why" behind policies and regulations. (Redding, 1972:436-446)

While acknowledging the significance of the preceding principles, one must, at the same time, recognize that their generalizability must, in fact, be contingent on the type of company or organization under consideration. The extent then to which these principles

are applicable is situational.

In summary, a survey of relevant superior-subordinate communication must include consideration of patterns of communicative behaviors as well as patterns of interaction. This study extends this emphasis on patterns of behavior and interaction to a focus on isolated cases of downward task-relevant confidential information disclosure. It is only by the collection and observation of such cases that patterns can emerge from the data.

Openness in Communication

Although it is possible to distinguish at least two basic dimensions of openness in superior-subordinate communication, openness in message sending and openness in message receiving, the former is of particular interest here. According to Redding, this phenomenon refers to the "candid disclosure of feelings, or 'bad news,' and important company facts" (1972:330), and, in the context of this study, refers to task-relevant openness.

That openness in communication is an essential element in the organizational setting is demonstrated by research which has indicated a positive relationship between openness and satisfaction (Jablin, 1978b; Burke & Wilcox, 1969; Baird, 1974) and between openness and performance (Indik, Georgopoulos, & Seashore, 1961; Willits, 1967). Although the results of some research have denied the relationship between a manager's effectiveness and the extent to which he/she communicates openly with his/her subordinates (Rubin & Goldman, 1968), such research is, in fact, minimal.

Research in the area of communication openness has led to a number of conclusions. More specifically, research on the upward flow of communication indicates that subordinates are often

fearful of revealing feelings to their supervisors (Vogel, 1967), that subordinates frequently distort information which they disclose to their supervisors (Read, 1962; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974), and that subordinates generally feel that if they reveal unfavorable information to their supervisors, they will, in turn, be punished (Blau & Scott, 1962; Argyris, 1966; Sussman, 1974). These findings almost represent, it seems, a paradox, for while researchers recognize openness as an essential element in effective organizational communication, they, at the same time, admit to deficiencies in the process.

Of particular interest here are two specific doctoral dissertations which lay a foundation for the present study. These studies have examined superior and subordinate attitudes toward various types of supervisory responses to task-relevant and non-task relevant open messages sent by subordinates (Stull, 1975), and the attitudes of subordinates toward basic types of message responses (i.e.confirmation, disagreement, accedence, repudiation, disconfirmation) occurring in a dyad (Jablin, 1978a).

In an attempt to investigate communication openness in terms of perceived rewards, Stull (1975) hypothesized that supervisors and subordinates would perceive accepting and reciprocating responses as consequent interpersonal rewards for both task-relevant and non-task relevant communication openness, and that supervisors would prefer accepting over reciprocating responses for both task-relevant and non-task relevant communication openness.

The resulting findings were that supervisors and subordinates rated "acceptance" as a desirable supervisor response to both task-

relevant and non-task relevant communication openness by subordinates, supervisors and subordinates rated reciprocal openness by supervisors as a desirable supervisor response to both task-relevant and non-task relevant communication openness by subordinates, supervisors preferred acceptance over reciprocation as a supervisor response to both task-relevant and non-task relevant communication openness by subordinates, supervisors and subordinates did not agree on the frequency of actual supervisor responses, and all response-types were rated important.

The second dissertation (Jablin, 1978a) represented an effort to define the types of communicative responses characterizing superior-subordinate open and closed relationships. More specifically, this field experiment investigated, among other topics, the attitudes of subordinates toward five basic types of supervisory responses occurring in a dyad: confirmation, disagreement, accedence, repudiation, and disconfirmation.

Among other results, Jablin found a positive correlation between a subordinate's satisfaction with his/her superior and his/her perception of the communication openness in the relationship. Furthermore, results indicated that subordinates prefer to receive from their superiors responses, which are, in descending rank-order: confirming, disagreeing, acceding, repudiating, and disconfirming. These results then indicated that disconfirming responses were unacceptable in superior-subordinate communication and that subordinates preferred message responses from superiors that provided positive relational feedback.

The results of both dissertations jointly indicate that supervisory responses which convey encouragement via positive

information as well as favorable relational feedback are preferred to those messages conveying negative content and negative relational feedback.

Although the field abounds with research on communication openness, it contains no systematic analyses of downward task-relevant confidential information disclosure between superiors and subordinates. However, some empirical research does exist in the area of privileged communication which is noteworthy.

Privileged Communication

A survey of the empirical research on privileged communication indicates that the area of health care has been the focus of most of the attention to date. Although a few studies have examined the disclosure of such information in the clergy-penitent relationship, the majority have, in fact, focused on counselor-client, physician-patient, and psychiatrist-patient interactions. More specifically, the fields of therapy, counseling, psychology, psychotherapy, and psychiatry have represented areas in which there is an ongoing controversy. For many professionals, there has been a conflict between what they perceive as a moral obligation to safeguard information, and what they see as conditions necessitating the divulgence of patient-related information without consent. Insurance claims, child abuse legislation, laws requiring that potentially dangerous drivers be reported, and obligations of psychiatrists to warn intended or potential victims of threats made by patients--these represent conditions which may, in fact, necessitate the disclosure of privileged communication, and hence, a breach of confidentiality. Meeting legal as well as ethical responsibilities often becomes a controversial, difficult, and

problematic task for the teacher, practitioner, or researcher.

Only a few studies have investigated the disclosure of privileged information in settings external to the health profession. One such study, a dissertation (Eisele, 1974), examined the reaction of high school counselors in a forced-choice situation where they had to choose between revealing or withholding confidential information.

Conclusions for the study indicated that personal and social variables were inadequate predictors of counselor behavior in the ethical conflicts; counselors would withhold confidential information to protect their clients' welfare; counselors might reveal confidential information if someone other than their client might be harmed if they remained silent, and if the need to make a choice arose from their own value system rather than external coercion; the decision to reveal or withhold appeared to be based on the specific aspects of each case and most counselors felt a strong sense of conviction in the correctness of their decision, once made; and whether or not a counselor worked in a state with privileged communication laws appeared to make no difference in his/her probable decision.

Research, then, indicates that primary factors affecting the decision by health, as well as non-health, related professionals to disclose privileged information are the possibility of harm to a third party and internal pressure from within the counselor.

The present study thus represents an extension of the research efforts of Baird (1974), Stull (1975), and Jablin (1978a), for it examines supervisory attitudes toward a specific genre of supervisory

disclosure: confidential information. Not only does the present effort acknowledge the existence of downward task-relevant information disclosure between superiors and their subordinates, it also investigates the extent to which the disclosure of confidential information is perceived as acceptable by managers temselves. In other words, under what conditions is the disclosure of confidential task-relevant information by supervisors in the organizational setting perceived as acceptable by managers? To the extent that empirical research investigating the disclosure of confidential information has been limited primarily to information shared in interactions between professionals and clients within the health professions, this represents an extended application. To deny the occurrence of this type of disclosure within the organizational environment would be somewhat hasty or premature since, to date, no systematic qualitative or quantitative analysis has been used to study the phenomenon within the confines of that setting. At the same time, one cannot simply assume that the conditions under which confidential information disclosures are perceived as acceptable based on the professional-client dyad are replicated in the superior-subordinate dyad within an organizational setting.

Thus, the explicit purpose of the present study is to focus on conditions under which managers themselves perceive that such disclosures occur. Since previous research has indicated that communication openness is a desired goal between superiors and subordinates, within certain limits, the present research poses the following question:

RQ1: Under what conditions are managers most likely to disclose task-relevant confidential information to their subordinates?

METHOD

Subjects

This field study involved 94 managers; 45 of whom were first-line and the remaining 49 of whom were middle managers. These managers represented some 19 state agencies and were attending and participating in residential professional-growth seminars in a resort setting. These inservices for the first and middle-level managers alike were held during two separate weeks: April 8 - 13 and April 29 - May 4, 1984. Although the seminars for both groups of managers are held at the same site, the respective meetings are actually located in different rooms, have different agendas, and are instructed by different staff people "on loan" from various governmental agencies.

The managers were male and female, ranged in educational backgrounds from high school level to doctorate degrees, and ranged in state service from 6 months to 25 years/9 months. Participation in the research by these managers was strictly voluntary.

Procedures

The director of the program coordinating the professional-growth seminars was contacted by the researcher 10 weeks prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The goals of the study, along with the expected procedures, were discussed, and a contract was subsequently drawn up, which was signed by both parties.

Two different weeks, during which both groups of managers would be present, were designated, and the researcher was allowed 30 minutes with each group of managers to distribute, administer, and collect the questionnaires. Thus, this study operated on the

following timetable:

April 11 (Morning) -First Level Managers

April 11 (Afternoon)-Middle Level Managers

May 2 (Morning) -First Level Managers

May 2 (Afternoon) -Middle Level Managers

At the beginning of each session, a staff person introduced the researcher and stated to the managers that participation in the survey was strictly voluntary. The researcher also stressed the confidential nature of the questionnaire. The researcher then distributed to each manager a questionnaire, read the instructions to the managers, allowed them 20-30 minutes to complete the items, and collected the questionnaires.

Instrument

The questionnaire which was administered to the subjects was constructed especially for this study.

Prefaced by an introductory page containing an example of task-relevant confidential information disclosure between a superior and a subordinate, this instrument contains 11 items. These items investigate the nature of such disclosures in the organizational setting and are open-ended, rank-order, bi-polar, and close-ended in form. More specifically, the open-ended items investigated types of confidential job-related information, target persons for confidential information disclosures, reasons for providing such information, settings for such information sharing, and number of participants in these encounters. The rank-order items involve the ordering of confidential information according to which types the managers are most and least likely to share with subordinates, and the ordering of reasons according to which

the managers perceive are most and least common reasons for giving such information. The bi-polar item investigates the extent to which managers perceive disclosure encounters are planned or spontaneous, and the extent to which managers do or do not regret having given confidential task-relevant information to a worker. Finally, the close-ended questions investigate the media through which such information is transmitted and the frequency with which it is shared.

Data Analysis

These data were analyzed qualitatively by the use of content analysis. More specifically, managerial responses to the questions were coded, categorized, and examined for frequencies of responses.

RESULTS

The types of confidential task-relevant information and the frequencies with which first and middle-level managers listed these categories are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Because most of the 94 managers indicated multiple types of confidential job-related information, there is a wide range of information categories, and an examination of this table reveals some 43 categories. Although some of these information types can possibly be collapsed into others, this schema allows one to observe the diversity of the responses, which, in some cases, reflect agential priorities.

The managers indicated information types which fell into three categories: structural, personal, and peer-oriented. Those

responses which were structural in content related to the organization and its intraorganizational processes, procedures, and practices, while the personal responses related specifically to the subordinate. The third category, peer-oriented information, related specifically to the subordinate's peers. Hence, these first and middle managers perceived that such disclosures could be personal (e.g. potential changes in subordinate's responsibilities and duties), structural (e.g.potential budget changes and/or cuts), or peer-oriented (e.g.reprimands and/or disciplinary measures of subordinate's peers) in nature.

From these information categories emerged four which the managers perceived they would most likely disclose to a subordinate and four which they would least likely disclose. In order of descending frequency, managers indicated they would be most likely to: (1) forecast information regarding new and/or revised jobs, responsibilities, and positions prior to formal announcement; (2)forecast budget changes; (3)discuss candidates for promotion; and (4)discuss merit raises of the subordinate's peers. Likewise, managers indicated they would be least likely to: (1)discuss performance appraisals and/or evaluation reviews of the subordinate's peers; (2)discuss reprimands and/or disciplinary measures of the subordinate's peers; (3)discuss candidates for promotions; and (4)discuss personal problems of the subordinate's peers. The reader will note that one information category (i.e. promotion candidates) appears among both sets of items. This discrepancy may, in fact, simply represent personal and/or agential differences among the managers.

In conclusion, the items which these managers are most likely to disclose are therefore primarily structural in content, while they are least likely to share information which is peer-oriented.

Whereas the categories of task-relevant confidential information are relatively well-defined, the managerial reasons for disclosure, presented in Table 2, are not quite so well demarcated.

Insert Table 2 about here

The most frequently stated reason for disclosing such information to one's subordinate appeared to be a general catchall: to provide information when there is a "need-to-know" in order to increase awareness. Such a category could ostensibly subsume others, such as preparing the subordinate for anticipated jobs, situations, or changes; aiding in planning; or providing information which directly affects the subordinate and/or job. However, since managerial responses distinguished these various reasons, the categories have therefore remained intact.

From these reasons for disclosing such information emerged four which the managers indicated would most likely lead to information disclosure and three which would least likely lead to such disclosures. In descending frequency, managers indicated they would most likely disclose confidential information in order: (1) to motivate the subordinate, (2) to develop team spirit, (3) to provide information when there is a "need-to-know", and (4) to solicit subordinate input. Likewise, managers indicated they would least likely disclose such information in order: (1) to develop or display trust, (2) to prepare the subordinate for

anticipated changes, and (3) to solicit subordinate input. The reader will note that one reason (i.e. soliciting subordinate input) appears among both sets of items. This discrepancy may, in fact, reflect different personal and/or agential preferences among the managers.

An examination of the remaining data indicates several trends. Of the 94 managers participating in this phase, 79 (84%) indicated that they did share varying degrees of confidential information with the subordinates. Among these 79 respondents, 65 (82%) indicated that such disclosures occur within the office setting "behind closed doors", while the remaining managers included lounges, stairwells, and homes as settings. In addition 72 (91%) indicated that face-to-face was the primary medium of transmitting such information, although a few managers did indicate that the telephone and written means also served as media. Furthermore, 57 (72%) of the respondents specified one-on-one interactions between the superior and the subordinate as the primary form of interaction; there were however, some respondents who indicated that such information-sharing occurred in groups and in meetings involving all staff members.

Interestingly enough, 33 (42%) of the managers indicated that such encounters were planned and that such disclosures were always well-contemplated with specific objectives. Another 42% of the managers indicated that their encounters were generally spontaneous in nature, arising in the course of job-related conversations or in response to subordinate queries. The remaining 16% failed to respond.

In a similar manner, 37 (47%) of the managers expressed no regrets in having shared such information because discretion had been exercised in the type of information shared, their confidence had not been betrayed, and the disclosures had not backfired. On the other hand, 36 (46%) indicated some regret in having shared confidential information because the information had had an adverse effect on the subordinate's morale, the information had been misused and misinterpreted, and the disclosure caused the manager to feel unprofessional. The remaining 7% failed to respond. Of the 36 managers expressing regret, the majority indicated that the disclosure had caused problems when the information had been misused and/or misinterpreted. More specifically, these 20 managers (55%) indicated that such information had not been kept confidential and had often become distorted. Another 15 managers (42%) indicated that the disclosure had adversely affected the workers' morale, resulting in "reactive" responses, anxiety, bitterness, and misunderstandings. One remaining manager (3%) indicated that he/she felt unprofessional engaging in such activities

Finally, the managers failed to indicate any specific trend in the frequency with which they share such information with their subordinates: 11 (14%) reported disclosing it as often as necessary; 23 (29%) reported disclosing it once a month; and 16 (20%) reported disclosing it once every five-to-six months.

DISCUSSION

To summarize, results of the data indicate that:

(1)Managers are most likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information which concerns structural

changes within the organization.

(2)Managers are least likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information which concerns the subordinate's peers.

(3)Managers are most likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information in order to motivate, to increase team spirit, and to increase awareness.

(4)Managers are least likely to disclose to workers task-relevant confidential information in order to develop trust and to prepare them for anticipated changes.

(5)Most disclosures of task-relevant confidential information occur in private face-to-face encounters between the manager and the worker in the office setting.

(6)Disclosures of task-relevant confidential information are planned as well as spontaneous in nature.

(7)Managers vary in the frequency with which they disclose task-relevant confidential information.

(8)Managers perceive past task-relevant confidential information disclosures with favor as well as disfavor.

As a preliminary consideration of the topic of downward task-relevant confidential information disclosure between superiors and subordinates, this study has resulted in several conclusions. More specifically, managers are most likely to share information regarding structural changes within the organization in private face-to-face interactions with their subordinates. Occurring most often in the office setting, such disclosures may vary in the extent to which the managers plan them beforehand or regret them afterwards.

Although managers do not appear to differ significantly, several trends do emerge. Most interesting of the findings however is the fact that such information-sharing seems motivated by a desire to enhance superior-subordinate relationships.

These conclusions definitely expand the scope of research in communication openness within the organizational setting. Not only does this study acknowledge the need for an open communication climate between superiors and subordinates, but it also recognizes the transmission of confidential information from managers to selected workers. Furthermore, this study recognizes the relative confidentiality of different information types, as well as motives for such disclosures. To researchers and theorists, these results point to several new avenues for investigation. To organizations, they represent a recognition of such a phenomenon and an opportunity to incorporate the conclusions into their ideologies.

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Table 1

Frequency Data:

Confidential Task-Relevant Information

Information Category	Frequency
Performance appraisals and/or evaluation reviews of subordinate's peers	42
Merit raises of subordinate's peers	25
Candidates for promotion	22
Reprimands and/or disciplinary measures of subordinate's peers	18
Personal problems of subordinate's peers (e.g.health or family concerns, that are affecting his/her performance, which the employee has asked to be kept confidential)	17
Salaries and/or steps on scale of subordinate's peers	16
Personnel files and/or employment applications of subordinate's peers	15
Potential personnel redistribution and/or cuts	14
Potential position changes and/or cuts	13
Potential budget changes and/or cuts	13
Internal affairs investigations; pending lawsuits; EEO grievances and/or complaints against agency, particularly if cases are active and not settled	10
Terminations and/or probations of subordinate's peers	6
Potential programmatic and procedural changes	5
Personnel investigations and/or inquiries by state and federal courts (e.g.allegations of brutality)	4
Potential changes in subordinate's responsibilities and duties	4

Information Category	Frequency
Candidates for demotion	3
Job applicant interview narrative	3
Client file and/or records	3
Selections prior to formal employment offer and agency announcement	2
Resignation plans of subordinate's peers	2
Retirement plans of subordinate's peers	2
Insurance beneficiaries of subordinate's peers	2
Potential policy changes	2
Personal leave requests of subordinate's peers	1
Production levels of subordinate's peers	1
Conference narratives	1
Personnel transfers or movement of managers prior to formal announcement	1
Productivity problems	1
Torts claims	1
Property appraisals	1
Routine of new highways	1
Office closings	1
Departmental goals	1
Departmental legislative proposals	1
Potential equipment additions	1
Cost estimates	1
Right-of-way requirements	1
Contract negotiations	1

Information Category	Frequency
Opinions of subordinate's peers	1
Subordinate's relations with peers	1
Citizen complaints against subordinates	1
Personal, non-job related information about subordinates (i.e.gossip) that could become job-related if disclosed (e.g.love affair between two employees that was inappropriate)	1
Something the "big boss" plans for us	1

Table 2

Frequency Data:

Disclosure Reasons

Reason Category	Frequency
To provide information when there is a perceived "need-to-know" in order to increase awareness	17
To motivate the subordinate	9
To enhance or facilitate performance and productivity	9
To provide information which directly affects the subordinate and/or job	9
To solicit subordinate input	8
To provide information when the subordinate is perceived as trustworthy (i.e.feeling that the subordinate will not repeat information)	7
To prepare the subordinate for anticipated jobs, situations, or changes	7
To insure the availability of feedback in the forms of opinions and information from others when it is needed	6
To develop team spirit	6
To aid in planning	5
To develop or display trust	4
To increase the subordinate's self-esteem (i.e.make him/her feel important)	4
To alleviate fears,insecurity, and anxiety	4
To indicate an interest in the subject	3
To solve problems	2
To provide positive and/or negative feedback	2
To disspel wild rumors	2

Reason Category	Frequency
To steer subordinate away from troublesome situations	2
To evaluate subordinate reactions	2
To maintain good communication	2
To "blow off steam"	2
To indicate a need for a confidant(e)	1
To provide reasons/rationale for various actions	1
To provide information concerning a job applicant to subordinates who are participating in the employee selection process, in which consultation on a confidential level is necessary	1
To help in management	1
To "stroke" the "informal system" within unit	1
To think out resolutions	1
To clarify perceptions	1
To relate the "big picture"	1
To identify problems	1
To help in decision-making	1